









In soft fall twilight,
in blue-beloved air,
with harvest moon soon shining,
our maidens take their places
as though around an altar.





In time, the Cretan
women dance in measure
round an altar,

stamping the wine-
fine flowers'
incense from the grass

with gentle feet.

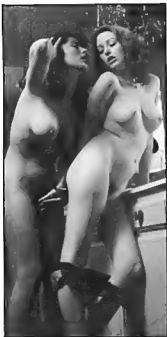




Mnasidica
is more shapely

than the tender
Gyrinno.





O my maidenhead,
where hast thou
gone?

Never
again wilt thou
come again for me,
never!





And the golden pulse
grew upon
the shores.

But what one
most desires

is as far away
as breath.







A sweet-voiced
maiden sang:

Come hither,
come hither,
my fair-haired
Graces,
come hither,
my Graces, to me.

Come now,
come now,
with long-flowing
hair,
come now,
my Muses, to me.





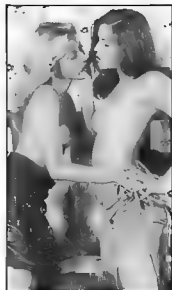


When the moon grows round
with her own light,
and gowns the world in silver,

the shy, attendant stars
blush and turn away,
in a darkness of their own,

like bridesmaids at a wedding.





For her sake,

I am paler
than grass,
and in my madness
seem little better
than one dead —

But I will dare
all for the
sake of love.







For those who sacrifice
set sweet garlands around their lovely hair —
for flowers are first in favor of the Graces and Muses,
who turn from those who turn from roses
and the flowers of radiant hair.





Violet-weaving,
pure,
softly smiling
Sappho,

I would say
something,
but shame
restrains me.





No one maiden
can ever know
as much as you,

who are surely,
with touch,
as wise

as the sunlight.





O Muse of the golden throne,
hear the women singing sweetly
in high pure voices
in the land
of our elder,
priest of Teos.





But for you,
Atthis,

the thought of me
dissolves —

and your eyes
fly away

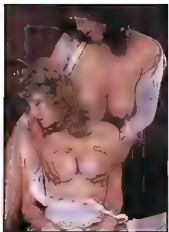
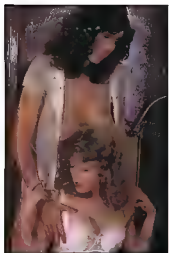
like stars.



Thou forgettest

thou lovest
another more

than me.







Like doves
in snow,
their hearts



turned cold,
and they dropped
their wings.

According to
my weeping:
this and all

care let
buffeting winds
bear away.





Someday,

men may
remember us

like this
with longing.







And round about the breeze
murmurs cool

through apple-boughs,

and slumber streams
from quivering leaves.







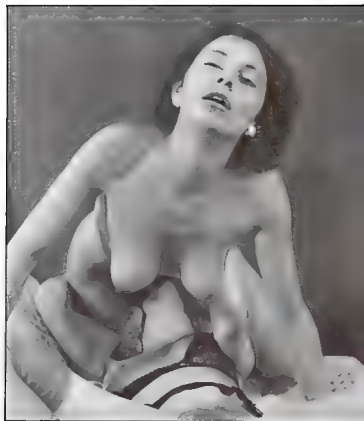


Moan for your
virginity,
as the sweet-apple

blushed on the end
of the bough,
the very end
of the bough,

not once noticed
by the harvesters,
or if noticed,

not reached.



As on the hills

the shepherds
trample
the hyacinth

under foot,
and the flower
darkens

on the ground.





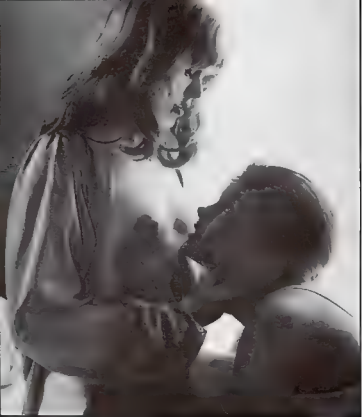
I will use my
tongue
for song

like wine

to please my
girl-
friends.







Come now,
Eos, gold-
sandalled dawn.

An embroidered strap
of fair Lydian work
will cover the feet
of my love.





What end my frenzied
thoughts pursue —
For what loved youth
I spread anew
my amorous nets —
“Who, Sappho, who?”





Thus contend
our maidens

with rosy arms
and glancing eyes

and cheeks
as fair as wine

from roses.





Quickly they came
like light,

and thou,
blest lady,

smiling with clear
undying eyes

didst ask me
what was the woe

that troubled me,
and wherefore

I had cried
to thee.





With your last
touch,

I hear
spring's messenger,

the sweet-throated
nightingale.







And there the bowl
of ambrosia was mixed,
and Hermes took the ladle
to pour out for the gods;
and then they all held
goblets, and made libation,
and wished the bridegroom
all good luck.



But come, O Aphrodite, Queen.

Even before thou didst hear
my voice from afar, and listen,
leaving thy father's golden house
thou camest with chariot
yoked with dazzling colors of wings —
rainbows which pulled your car
like parrots, the colors of the night
flapping fast around our dark earth
to my door, from heaven through mid-
sky. So quickly, these voices arrived;
and thou, O blessed one, smiling
with immortality, wondered at my wonder,
and asked what had befallen me,
asked what in my mad heart I most desired
to see, what Beauty wouldst I draw now
to love me, and asked "Who wrongs thee,
Sappho? For even if she flies, soon shall
she follow. And if she rejects your gifts,
soon shall she give herself, and if
she loves you not, soon shall she love,
however loathe."







In spring,

Leda they say
once found
an egg

hidden

under wild
hyacinths.





There should be no sorrow
in the house of the poet.

It is not fitting for
a proud or perfumed palace.





Far sweeter of tone than harp,
more golden than gold,

Love is the weaver
of fictions.

Iris,
the rainbow,

can blaze
through rain

with a thousand
hues.





I love, I burn, but only love require,
for nothing less can quench my raging fire.

What youth, what raving lover shall I gain?
Where is the captive that should wear
my chain?

In Scythian wood,
they dip fleeces

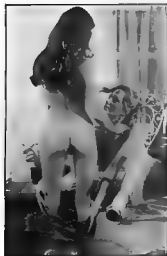
and make them quince-colored,
and dye their hair yellow.





Sometimes,
you seem to me
a child

so slightly
built
and spoiled.



Stars wear
their light,

as you wear
your pale hair.





Aphrodite has honored
you above all others.

A blush of honey
tints your eyes,

and your body
as golden

as honey.



All night,
the stars comb
their light
in heaven.

But no star
in her fire
can equal your eyes.





A goddess,
she came

shivering from
heaven

wearing her thin
purple mantle.





There is nothing
more beautiful

than a star
in the black mirror

of a river.









Upon a soft cushion,
I arrange

my body for you.



Sweet Mother,
I cannot weave
my web of silk,
broken as I am
by longing for
one whom I will
not name – soft
Aphrodite calls
my name in soft
rushes.







Evening brings all
the bright
morning scattered;

you bring the sheep,
the goat,
the child

back to her mother.

A soft whiteness flows
over her lovely face,

pale as a rose,
pale as the garden
moon

in rain.

I shall be
forever

your virgin.

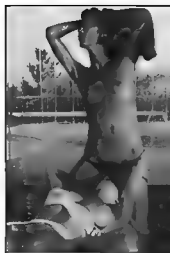




Tonight,
you will sleep well

on the breast
of your

tender girl-
friend.







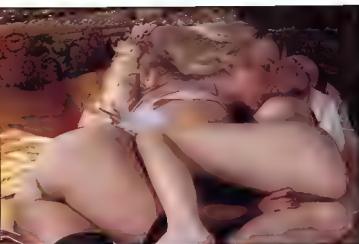
I love delicacy
above all else —

and for me, Love

has the sun's
splendor and beauty.





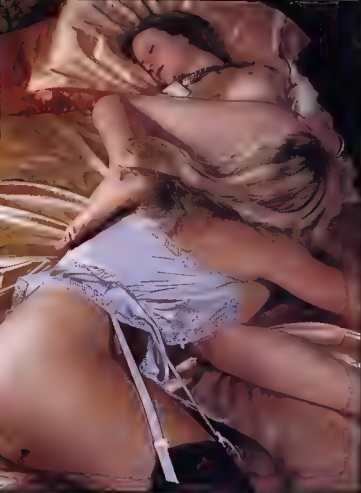


I do not
think
to caress

the sky
with my
own

two arms.





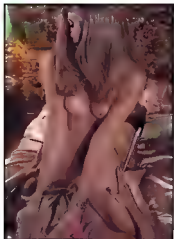
If you love us,
take a young girl
to bed with you —

for I cannot abide
the thought

of an old woman
with a young man.

Foolish woman,
pride not thyself

on a ring.



And so I flutter
like a child after

her mother.





I have a fair
daughter

with a form like
a golden flower,

Cleis, my beloved,
above whom I prize

not all Lydia
nor lovely Lesbos.

Why weary me,
lovely swallow,

daughter

of Pandion?





Come now,
divine shell,

become vocal
for me.







And nothing
prevented Sappho
from praying

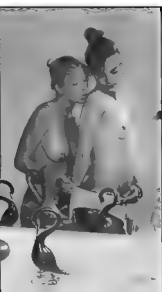
that the night
might be doubled
for her

In a dream,
I talked with

the daughter
of Cyprus,

the golden-haired
Aphrodite.





Come,

Aphrodite's handmaid,
bright as gold.

And dark-eyed Sleep,
child of Night.





No man
from any other
land can sing

as you can sing,
Lesbian lover,
of pure
high voice.

Come to the wedding
of your desire,

make haste to the
maiden

of your desire.





What country girl
can bewitch
thy heart, who knows
not how to raise
her dress about
her ankles?



Come, goddess of Cyprus,
and in golden cups
serve nectar

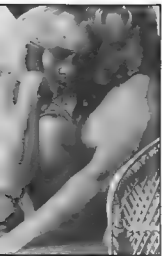
subtly mixed
with delights.



I bought thee
purple napkins
for thy lap . . .

Do not despise them.

I brought these
from Phocaea,
these sundry gifts
for thy lap.



So she
wrapped herself
well

in delicate
linen.





How shall I
compare thee?

To the youth
of a rose,
or a soft
new shoot?

Yet now thy
kisses are neither
honey nor
bee to me.

But they whom I
benefit most

injure me most.

Little bitch,
when anger blows
through your breast

guard your tongue
from worthless
yapping.







Though she was an athlete
and the swiftest runner
of Gyara, I taught Hero
many things.

A wind rushes
from heaven

with golden ankles.



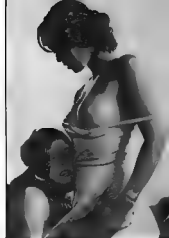


The dark river Time
is flowing by,

the moon has set,
and the Pleiades are dim;

it is midnight,
and I do not want

to sleep alone.





Now Love masters by body,
and shakes me,

O bitterness of things too sweet!







Now Eros shakes my soul,

a wind on the mountain,
falling among the oaks.





But for thee
will I lead
to the altar

the offspring
of a white
goat . . .

and add
a libation

for thee.





Leto and Niobe
were very

dear friends.

Stand face to face,
with me,
as a friend,

and draw aside
the veil
from your eyes,

and let me see
thy divinity.





And all night long,
Sleep holds
their eyes.



